

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 5439

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EG
SUBJ: CABINET CHANGE BRUITED

1. FOR LAST SEVERAL DAYS, JOURNALISTS, POLITICIANS, AND BUSINESSMEN HAVE TOLD US OF RUMORS THAT SADAT WILL CHANGE HIS CABINET, INCLUDING PRIMIN SALIM, SHORTLY AFTER RETURNING FROM US. CONSENSUS OF RUMOR MONGERS IS THAT SALIM WILL TAKE OVER AS ASSEMBLY SPEAKER FROM SAYYID MAR'I AND ASU HEAD MUSTAFA KHALIL WILL BE PRIMIN. FOUR CURRENT DEPRIMINS WILL REMAIN (FAHMY, GAMASY, KAISOUNI, GHANIM), BUT A FIFTH MAY BE ADDED, IE. ABD AL-QADIR HATIM, TO COORDINATE PRODUCTION AFFAIRS. LATTER IS CURRENTLY CHAIRMAN OF ADVISORY NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PRODUCTION. MININT PORTFOLIO NOW HELD BY PRIMIN WOULD GO TO CAREER POLICEMAN NABAWI. IF SALIM DOES DEPART, LIKELY THAT MININDUSTRY SHAHIN WILL ALSO LEAVE, GOOD NEWS FOR BOTH FOREIGN AND EGYPTIAN BUSINESSMEN.

2. COMMENT: SINCE THESE RUMORS SO WIDESPREAD, SO CONSISTENT, AND FROM WELL PLACED SOURCES, WE THINK THEY MAY HAVE AT LEAST SOME SUBSTANCE. IT SOMEWHAT PUZZLING THAT SADAT WOULD CONSIDER PUTTING KHALID, AN ECONOMIST, IN POST OF PRIMIN IN PLACE OF SALIM, WHO IS HIS SENIOR SECURITY EXPERT. LATTER WAS
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CONFIRMED IN JOB AFTER JAN RIOTS DESPITE SEVERE CRITICISM BY MANY OF HIS POLITICAL AND SECURITY PERFORMANCE AT THAT DIFFICULT TIME. SADAT OBVIOUSLY BELIEVED THEN THAT HE NEEDED EXPERIENCED POLICEMEN IN JOB. NEVERTHELESS, SADAT'S OWN SELF-CONFIDENCE SEEMS FULLY RESTORED NOW AND HIS CONFIDENCE IN SALIM'S JUDGMENT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN RESTORED IN POST-RIOT PERIOD. FURTHER, NABAWI IS SALIM PROTEGE, SO PERHAPS EVEN IN SPEAKER

ROLE, SALIM COULD CONTINUE PLAY SOME SECURITY ROLE.

3. RETENTION KAISOUNI, WHOSE INTERNATIONAL STATURE SO VALUABLE TO EGYPT'S SEARCH FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, WOULD ALSO PROVIDE ASSURANCE THAT GOE STILL PUTTING HIGH PRIORITY ON SETTING ECONOMIC/FINANCIAL HOUSE IN ORDER.

4. ON FAHMY, ONLY ONE INFORMANT SUGGESTS HE MIGHT GO. ASHRAF MARWAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT SINCE PEACE PROGRESS NOT EXPECTED MOVE FAST IN 1977, FAHMY NOT NEEDED FOR AT LEAST A YEAR AND WOULD BE DROPPED. THIS, WE THINK SMACKS OF WISHFUL THINKING ON PART OF MARWAN WHO ENJOYS A MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH FAHMY OF INTENSE DISLIKE AND JEALOUSY. MANY JOURNALISTS, ON OTHER HAND, THINK SADAT SO PLEASED WITH FAHMY'S PERFORMANCE THAT HE MIGHT GET NOD AS PRIMIN.

5. RUMORED DEPARTURE OF MAR'I FROM PUBLIC SCENE MIGHT BE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE OF ALL. MAR'I, WHO WANTS OUT OF DEMANDING JOB AS SPEAKER (SADAT HAD TO INSIST HE RUN AGAIN FOR ASSEMBLY LAST FALL), IS DISTRESSED AND HURT BY ACCUSATIONS OF CORRUPTION LEVELLED AGAINST HIM. HE WANTS WORLD FOOD COUNCIL CHAIRMANSHIP AND HAS ASKED FOR WALDHEIM AND USG SUPPORT.

6. MAR'I HAS PLAYED KEY DOMESTIC ROLE FOR SADAT. HE HAS HANDLED RECALCITRANT ASSEMBLY WITH CONSUMMATE SKILL. MORE IMPORTANT, HIS POWER AND PRESTIGE ON LOCAL SCENE (DERIVING FROM SADAT'S FULL CONFIDENCE IN HIM) HAS MADE HIM SECOND MOST POWERFUL MAN IN EGYPT. WE KNOW OF NO OTHER FIGURE WITH MORE INFLUENCE AND BETTER ACCESS TO THE PRESIDENT. IT WILL
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BE INTERESTING TO SEE IF SADAT WILL ALLOW HIM TO LEAVE PUBLIC SCENE.
EILTS

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